

Message Text

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13
ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 PA-01 USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 SAM-01 SAJ-01 /054 W
----- 050276

P R 310810Z AUG 76
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9166
INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY TAIPEI
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
USLO PEKING
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK
USIA WASHDC
CINCPAC HI
CINCUNC SEOUL KS

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, MOPS, KN, KS, US
SUBJECT: ROK REACTIONS TO PANMUNJOM DEVELOPMENTS

REF: (A) STATE 206131, (DTG 190517Z AUG 76), (B) SEOUL 6742
(DTG 270941Z AUG 76)

BEGIN SUMMARY: KOREAN PRESS PAST THREE DAYS CONTINUED
ITS COVERAGE OF PANMUNJOM RELATED EVENTS BUT AT LESSENER PACE.
THERE WAS MIXTURE OF REACTIONS TO COURSE OF EVENTS WITH SOME
EDITORIAL AND PRIVATE COMMENT PLAYING UP GAINS FROM INCIDENT
AND STRENGTHENING EFFECT IT HAS HAD ON ROK/US RELATIONS WHILE
OTHERS STRESSED PATTERN OF RETREAT SINCE INCIDENT OOK PLACE.
HOWEVER, WHILE SOME DISAPPOINTMENT CLEARLY LINGERED BENEATH
SURFACE, PAPERS CONTINUE TO AVOID DIRECT CRITICISM OF U.S.
HANDLING OF INCIDENT. END SUMMARY.

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1. KOREAN PRESS CONCENTRATED ITS ATTENTION OVER WEEKEND

OF AUGUST 28-29 ON PROSPECTS FOR 381ST MAC MEETING SCHEDULED FOR FIVE PM ON AUGUST 28, TOO LATE TO BE COVERED IN MAJOR DAILIES. BY AUG 31 THEY HAD SHIFTED ATTENTION TO FORTHCOMING SECRETARIES' MEETING.

2. ONLY WEEKEND EDITORIAL COMMENT NOTED APPEARED AUGUST 28 IN KUK-JE SHIN-BO FROM PUSAN. EDITORIAL WRITERS ADMITTED "DISAPPOINTMENT AND A SENSE OF FRUSTRATION" AT DEVELOPMENT OF SITUATION SINCE AUGUST 18 INCIDENT. NEVERTHELESS, WRITERS POINT OUT THAT KIM IL-SONG'S MESSAGE IS FIRST SUCH IN 23 YEARS OF ARMISTICE AND THAT HIS TERM "REGRET" "MEANS SOMETHING MORE" THAN USUAL. WRITERS CONCLUDE, IN VEIN FOLLOWED IN OTHER COMMENTARIES SEEN LATELY, THAT CLASH HAS "FURTHER SOLIDIFIED FRIENDLY TIES" BETWEEN ROK AND US AND THAT FINAL OUTCOME, BOTH MILITARILY AND DIPLOMATICALLY, WILL BE ADVANTAGEOUS TO ROK. THIS POINT IS BEING MADE TO US INCREASINGLY IN PRIVATE AS WELL AS IN NEWS COMMENTARY, ALTHOUGH ROK MILITARY OFFICERS WE TALK TO CONTINUE HARD LINE PRESSURE FOR TOUGHER RESPONSE.

3. ENGLISH-LANGUAGE PRESS OF PAST FEW DAYS CONTINUED TO CALL FOR CAUTION IN EVALUATING NORTH'S PROPOSAL TO SPLIT DMZ. ON AUGUST 28, OFFICIAL KOREA HERALD RAN EDITORIAL STRESSING NEED FOR NORTH KOREAN (NK) GUARANTEES OF SAFETY AND CHANGE IN NK ATTITUDES BEFORE NK PROPOSAL IS CONSIDERED. SEPARATE FEATURE ARTICLE QUOTED "SOME KOREAN MILITARY SOURCES" AS POINTING OUT DANGERS IN PROPOSAL ALONG LINES OF CHOSON ILBO ARTICLE NOTED IN REFTTEL (B). KOREA TIMES FEATURE AUGUST 29 TERMED KIM'S REPLY OF AUGUST 19 A "PROSTRATION" AND SPECULATED THAT PRESSURE FROM USSR AND PRC, IN ADDITION TO "UNC'S UNPRECEDENTLY STRONG POSITION," MAY HAVE OCCASIONED IT. WRITER CONCLUDES THAT ROK COMES OUT OF INCIDENT ON "HIGHER END OF THE SEESAW" AND THAT NK PROPOSAL IS PROBABLY A DECEPTION TO "GET OUT OF THE PRESENT DIFFICULT SITUATION CHEAPLY."

4. AFTERNOON PAPERS ON AUGUST 30, THOUGH NOT DIRECTLY CRITICIZING US, POINTED OUT PROBLEMS IN DEALING WITH NORTH WHICH REPRESENT INDIRECT CRITICISM OF JOINT US-ROK LINE FOLLOWED SO FAR IN DEALING WITH NK. IN ITS EDITORIAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND FEATURE ARTICLES, TONGA ILBO POINTED TO PATTERN OF UN SIDE'S YIELDING TO OBSTINANCY OF NORTH, BY GIVING UP ON ONE "PRECONDITION" AFTER ANOTHER AND THUS LOSING ITS FOCUS ON IMPORTANT ISSUES OF REPARATIONS AND PUNISHMENT. TONGA PREDICTED THAT, AS RESULT, SECRETARIES' MEETING, TO WHICH UN SIDE FINALLY AGREED, WOULD NOT GO SMOOTHLY BECAUSE OF THE DIFFERENCE IN EXPECTATIONS OF THE TWO SIDES.

5. TONE OF TREATMENT IN OFFICIAL SEOUL SHINMUN WAS LESS
CRITICAL OF LINE TAKEN IN DEALINGS WITH NORTH, BUT STILL
INSISTED THAT UN SIDE MUST FOLLOW PRINCIPLES AND RESPOND
TO PUBLIC OPINION CALLING FOR PREVENTION OF FURTHER
PROVOCATIONS. NK MUST ADMIT RESPONSIBILITY FOR INCIDENT
SO THAT SIMILAR PLOTS MAY BE DISCOURAGED IN FUTURE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, DMZ, BORDER INCIDENTS, INTERNATIONAL PEACEKEEPING FORCES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 31 AUG 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976SEOUL06845
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760330-0049
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t1976083/aaaaabqm.tel
Line Count: 122
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 STATE 206131, 76 SEOUL 6742
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 03 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <03 MAR 2004 by morefirh>; APPROVED <07 SEP 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ROK REACTIONS TO PANMUNJOM DEVELOPMENTS
TAGS: SOPN, MOPS, PFOR, KN, KS, US
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006